

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 3006

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, NATO, GR, TU
SUBJECT: MOD DENIES PRESS REPORT OF ASSIGNMENT OF TURKISH ADMIRAL
AS NATO NAVAL COMMANDER IN MEDITERRANEAN

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED:

1. THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE HAS DENIED AN ATHENS PRESS
REPORT THAT NEXT JUNE A TURKISH ADMIRAL WILL REPLACE THE
ITALIAN ADMIRAL (APPARENTLY ADMIRAL ALDO BALDINI, COMNAV SOUTH)
CURRENTLY ASSIGNED AS COMMANDER OF NATO NAVAL FORCES IN
THE MEDITERRANEAN.

2. LEFTIST ELEFTHERTOTYPYIA CLAIMED IN AN APRIL 10 ARTICLE
THAT THE "AMERICANS" HAD DECIDED TO APPOINT A TURKISH
ADMIRAL IN CHARGE OF NATO NAVAL FORCES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN.
ACCORDING TO ELEFTHERTOTYPYIA A TURKISH ADMIRAL WOULD REPLACE
THE INCUMBENT ITALIAN ADMIRAL NEXT JUNE FOR A TWO-YEAR
PERIOD. THE DECISION TO DO THIS, ALWAYS ACCORDING TO
ELEFTHERTOTYPYIA, WAS NOT ANNOUNCED OFFICIALLY TO THE GOG BUT WAS
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ALLEGEDLY CONVEYED TO A SENIOR GREEK OFFICER BY
GENERAL HAIG. THE OFFICER WAS SAID TO HAVE REPLIED
THAT HE WOULD RESIGN HIS POSITION IN PROTEST IF SUCH
AN ASSIGNMENT WAS MADE. THE ARTICLE THEN QUOTES
"AUTHORITATIVE MILITARY CIRCLES IN GREECE" AS SAYING
THAT ASSIGNMENT OF A TURKISH ADMIRAL TO A MEDITERRANEAN-
WIDE NATO COMMAND WOULD ENDANGER US-GREEK RELATIONS

AND DEMONSTRATES U.S. INEPTITUDE IN EVALUATING THE STRATEGIC SITUATION OF NATO'S SOUTHERN FLANK.

3. THE SEMI-OFFICIAL ATHENS NEWS AGENCY (ANA) BULLETIN REPORTS APRIL 11 THAT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE ISSUED DENIAL YESTERDAY OF THE ELEFTHEROTYPAI ALLEGATIONS, POINTING OUT THAT DECISIONS ON HIGH-LEVEL NATO ASSIGNMENTS ARE SUBJECT TO AGREEMENT BY ALL NATO MEMBERS. THE ANA STORY QUOTED "POLITICAL CIRCLES" TO THE EFFECT THAT ASSIGNMENT OF A TURKISH ADMIRAL MIGHT BE POSSIBLE IF GREECE WITHDREW COMPLETELY FROM NATO, LEAVING TURKEY THE ONLY NATO MEMBER IN THE AREA. END UNCLASSIFIED.

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4. IN ADDITION, A FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE CLARIFIED TO US THAT THE INITIAL STORY APPEARED TO BE BASED ON RECENT DISCUSSIONS ABOUT COMMAND OF THE NAVAL ON-CALL FORCE MEDITERRANEAN (NAVOCFORMED). THESE TALKS ON ROTATING COMMAND OF THE FORCE, WHEN IT IS SEMI-ANNUALLY ACTIVATED, HAD BEEN STYMIED BY UNACCEPTABLE CALLS FOR A TURKISH COMMANDER. THE GOG, HE SAID, HAD SOUGHT TO DEFUSE THE ISSUE BY DENYING THE ERRONEOUS ELEFTHEROTYPIA STORY AND LEAVING THE CLARIFICATION UNSAID.
MCCLOSKEY

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